Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77
Palm Desert, CA 92261
(760) 346-6588

The Hourglass

Community
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FALL 2001 VOL. 9, NO. 3

VOICES FROM THE PAST
Pioneers Give Us a Delightful Glimpse into Their Lives and Times

The following vignettes were taken from notes found in the files of Hal Kapp, a local realtor who was very active in the community. It seems he planned to edit and tape them with music for some event, possibly in the late 1960s or early 1970s. If you lived in the valley at that time and recognize the format, please call the Society office and solve this mystery.

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THE KEEDY FAMILY (by Gertrude Keedy): We came to the desert in November of 1945 because a friend of my husband's had bought property from King Gillette for a real estate development. At that time Bob wanted to open a small grocery store -- not to sell groceries, but to sell property. You had to go to Indio or Palm Springs to buy a loaf of bread or a quart of milk. So we came down, looked at the project, and decided to stay.

During the time my husband was running his little grocery store, there were about 12 homes on the Palm Village side of the highway and nothing on the Palm Desert side; of course, it wasn't called Palm Desert at the time. Because there weren't that many customers and Godfrey also had a grocery store, Bob supplied his store with all the items that were hard-to-get after World War II, like butter and bacon and all that sort of thing. When he would open in the morning, he might have 100 people coming from Indio and Palm Desert and Palm Springs to buy these scarce items.

It was about that time that the Henderson brothers would come in to get a coke or some groceries. They were planning the other development, which became Palm Desert. Also at that time, my son was born; and so that made him the "first child born in Palm Desert." They built Palm Desert Grammar School and both my children, Douglas and Barbara, went through school there. I couldn't tell you how many children were enrolled, but the whole group of parents formed a P.T.A. I think there was a chart with all our names on it. Then, of course, along came the Brownie group, the Girl Scouts, and the Cub Scouts. Everybody in the community pitched in to do everything that needed to be done for the children.

In the early years, Cliff Henderson used to get us the tallest pine or fir tree he could find for Christmas, and put it in one of the back lots of Frontage Road where the stores are now. There would always be entertainment and gifts would be distributed.

KEEDY (*continued):* Of course, we all lived at Shadow Mountain Club, either around the pool or in the dining room. I mean, that was where everybody met every night and/or every day. They had Hawaiian entertainers and food; activities were going on all the time.This was a lot of fun because you could bring your kids.

My husband, Bob, was the head of the fire department which was all volunteer. They decided to have a big fund raising party. Cliff was so great about doing things like this at Shadow Mountain Club. Because he knew just about all the celebrities in the world, he was able to get the group called "Hell's a Poppin" and a large stage for them. They performed at the Shadow Mountain Club to raise money to help finance the fire department.

Ed Mullins and a partner, Charlie (I can't remember Charlie's last name), started the Palm Desert Pharmacy. They had a counter where you could get cokes and sandwiches and that sort of thing. Bob had always been interested in the restaurant business because he loved to watch his mother cook. So Ed decided to put an addition on the drug store to accommodate the food concession, and Bob ran it.

Later on Stan Ring, the man who designed our school, drew up a plan for Keedy's . It was just a little sleepy place for a while -- we never dreamed it would turn out so big. Anyway, that's how Bob got started in the restaurant business. That was 25 years ago, and he's still at it. I went to work for Thunderbird in 1955; then we opened Eldorado in October of 1959.

ROY & VELMA McCALL (by Roy McCall): Coming to work at College of the Desert was a dramatic experience in every sense of the word. It was a complete change in everything we had known for the five years I was dean of instruction at Modesto Junior College. Before we arrived, the college's temporary office was located on Highway 111. In fact we had our first official meeting with the board of trustees in that office at noon on July 1, 1959. Mrs. Brumwell cooked some chicken, and she and Gale brought it to the meeting.

The administration building was one of the first completed because it was simpler in design. I can still remember walking out onto the roof of that campus residence when the site development was begun. It was just like a colony of ants swarming all over. My job was that of business manager, farm manager, and dean of instruction. Taking care of the 60 acres of dates and hiring the crews to come in and harvest the grapes and dates was my responsibility. I made a bunch of signs and stuck them up in the date orchard and the grape vineyard where the various buildings for the new college were going to be located.

The president and I were the only ones there the first year. We accepted applications from all over, and so we brought in our dean of instruction at the end of that year. One of his jobs was to sift through those applications. Transportation was paid for all faculty applicants to come to the desert , and each one was interviewed personally by Dr. Ingles and myself. We were on the campus essentially three years before the college opened and students were admitted.

During the holidays we held a Christmas tea for all the staff, faculty and maintenance personnel each year that we were there. We lived on campus and wanted students to feel free to drop in to visit us, and they did. The idea of building an institution from the very beginning was really a great experience. It was a pleasure to select the faculty and see the first day students come on campus.

FRED CHISNALL (by Evelyn Chevoor): He was part of our early day experience, because he and his two boon companions were desert dwellers in the Cove. These two neighbors were Andy the Donkey Man and Chuckawalla Slim. They were all seasonal people who came when the days were nice and left when summer came along.

Fred lived in a neat panel truck, and its sign and a few well-displayed examples proclaimed to all passers-by that he specialized in desert paintings. Truth to tell, we called him "Old Paint" and duly resolved to buy one of his feeling renditions when we had a few nickels ahead. In later years Mr. Chisnall augmented his income by instructing classes. His pupils turned out very credible work; he was a good teacher.

When I worked as a cocktail waitress at Shadow Mountain Club, I would always stop and watch Fred Chisnall painting on the side of the road. I was interested in learning oils, so one day I asked him, "Fred, will you teach me how to oil paint?"

"Evie," he said, "you can take lessons from me once a week on your day off and I can teach you .....colors."

My friend, Thirza, was the social hostess at the club. One day I suggested, "Thirza, why don't we start an art club in Palm Desert?"

She said, "I think that's a marvelous idea, Evie."

I thought and thought and then said, "Let's name it the Shadow Mountain Palette Club." The two of us and Gladys Wither all took lessons from Fred Chisnall.

Finally, I had saved up enough money to buy one of Fred's paintings. Fred described it this way, "Well, I painted it right from here. I painted the Palm Desert Cove and it was painted right from this point. There's sort of an autumn haze over the top of it where there are houses and a few streets and roads." Somehow it seems an enduring tribute to Fred and his novices that the street in that area is now called Painters Path.

FALL LUNCHEON

Speaker: Doris Wilson, Superintendent - Desert Sands Unified School District

The first luncheon/meeting of the 2001-2002 season will be at Desert Falls Country Club in Palm Desert. The program has been planned as an overview of our local school district, highlighting events: past, present and future. Also, the "Volunteer of the Year" will be recognized. Please put Wednesday, October 24, on your calendar NOW and plan to attend. Looking forward to seeing you.

Luncheon Reservation Form

Date: Wednesday, October 24, 2001

Time: 11 a.m. (Social) - 12 noon (Lunch)

Place: Desert Falls Country Club

Cost: $20.00

Enclosed is my check for: _____

Number Attending: _____

Mail Check to: Historical Society of Palm Desert
P. O. Box 77
Palm Desert, CA 92261

Note: All reservations must be honored unless canceled before Monday, October 22. "No Shows" will be billed.

FIRE HOUSE YARD SALE

Date: **SATURDAY, SEPT. 22**

Time: **7:30 a.m. until ____?____**

Place: **Historic Fire House on El Paseo**

Chairman: **Gary Olesen** — Assistant: **Hal Rover**

Please donate: **old cars & boats, furniture, art works, toys & games, kitchen & home decor items, sports equipment, jewelry, antiques, office equipment, books & magazines, craft items, tools,**
everything except: clothes, shoes & linens
(Also: grocery bags = paper & plastic)

Please come to the sale and buy: **All of the above.**

Please volunteer your time to work: **Friday (Sept. 21) & Saturday (Sept. 22)**
(Call the office, 346-6588, and let us know when you can help.)

NEW MEMBERS

Marcia Erickson - *Contributing*
Margery Engh
Dale & Patti Gribow
Gary L. Hopper, D.D.S.
Molly Ann Thorpe
Carole Hagenow
Evan & Angela Lipschutz
Alan & Nadine Winterbotham
Rosemarie Sinheimer
Roxene Riley
Doris Ortego
Patricia Scully
Mary Nye

Please patronize our **BUSINESS MEMBERS**:

Abel, Krieger & Wilmeth
Lynda C. Anderson
Ron & Evetta Bock
Roy William Carver
Frank Goodman
Desert Discovery
Mr. & Mrs. Ken Williamson
Jeff Frisco for Hair
Keedy's Fountain & Grill
Jean Hanousek Martin
PFF Bank & Trust - Lanager
Shadow Mt. Resort & Racquet Club
Shadow Mt. Home Owners Assn.
Waste Management of the Desert

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WE HOLD IN LOVING MEMORY

L. Carolyn Fisher
Marian Meredith

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MINI - MUSTER

The Society's annual fire safety program for third graders will take place as follows:

Oct. 2 - James Carter School
Oct. 4 - Gerald Ford School
Oct. 8 - Abraham Lincoln School
Oct. 11 - Washington Charter School

This activity is sponsored in conjunction with teachers and parents at the various schools and the Riverside County Fire Department - station #33.

We need many volunteers for this program. The tasks involved give you delightful interaction with the youngsters and are not physically taxing.....like: tying on blindfolds, dispensing cold drinks, etc. Another bonus for volunteering your time is that the mothers of the respective schools serve you an excellent lunch. You will enjoy it so much, you will want to work at all four schools. For details and to volunteer one or more mornings, call the Society office 346-658.

DONATIONS TO OUR COLLECTIONS

Dan & BJ Callahan ..... *news items*
Marty & Willa Ruth McKell .... *news items, People-to-People scrapbook*
Bud Lesser .....*books*
Velma Dawson .....*marionettes, puppets*
Theda Lundquist .....*furniture,*
"Pioneer Lady" bust by Cyria Henderson

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Our next issue of the Hourglass will feature Cyria Henderson (artist & wife of Randall) and Bernice Lofland (P.D.'s first librarian.) If you have any recollections or items that will help us in our research, please call or write.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR.....

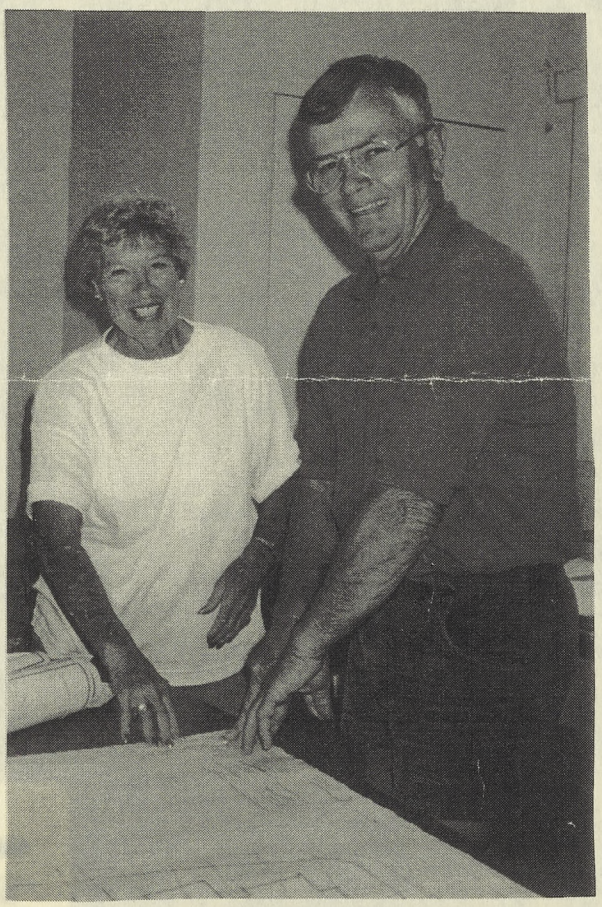
Issues of the "Palm Springs Villager" and "Harry Oliver's DESERT RAT Scrap Book." If you have copies to donate, we will be very grateful.

SMALL DOG OWNERS

Virginia Stevens (340-9377) will baby-sit your canine friend in her home for one or more days. She also needs subs to help.

BLUEPRINT PROJECT

The Society inherited all the blueprints held by the Palm Desert Property Owners Assn. when it was dissolved. Sorting these prints takes knowledge of P.D. history, map-reading skills, assessor and realtor/escrow savvy. We may have already weeded your house or business plans out of the hundreds in our collection. Do you need yours now? We are investing our time in this fund-raising project, so a donation of at least $20 is expected. If you want your plans or are interested in helping, call Ginny at 340-0828.



Lois Bradstreet & Hal Rover at work.

FIRE HOUSE SALE DONORS as of August

Bud Lesser, Ginny Mullins, Alan & Susie Hurst, Gordon Bishop, Virginia Stevens, Kay & Jim Young, Lorraine Meyer, Dick & Ginny Folkers, Lois Bradstreet, Velma Dawson, Angie & Hal Rover.

MEMBERSHIP

Ginny Mullins is working to make sure our list of members is up-to-date. Some of you have not yet paid your 2001 dues; if you received a notice, please send a check today so we can get all the loose ends tied up. We will publish a new roster booklet this Fall, and we want your name to be included.

A priority goal: each member should bring in one other member. If you have a friend who lives or works in Palm Desert, please encourage them to join.

Annual Dues Schedule

- Individual.....$ 15
- Family.....$ 20
- Contributing.....$ 100
- Patron.....$ 250
- Business/Organization.....
  1st year.....$ 75 Renewal.....$ 50
- Life.....$ 1000
- Supporting.....$251- ?

GOLF CART PARADE

It is the dream of some of our members that the Society decorate and enter a golf cart in the parade this year. How about you? Do you think it is a good idea? Have you ever worked on an entry?

"Living in Paradise" is this year's theme. Does that bring any creative visions to your imagination? Your idea could win a prize !!!

The restored fire engine with Mr. & Mrs. Santa is a tradition which we will continue; however, we need PR. There is a golf cart promised and even a sponsor if we need one. The Board of Directors will vote pro or con on an entry on Sept. 19. If you like the idea, call 346-6588 before that date.

The office reopens on Sept. 4 after being closed July and August. Drop by to chat and/or offer your services.

Editor: Ginny Folkers

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